

# THEOSOPHICAL COMMENT

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*Articles by H. P. Blavatsky*

IS CREATION POSSIBLE FOR MAN ?

ANSWERS TO QUERIES

OLD HINDU SHIPS

DOES VACCINATION PREVENT SMALLPOX ?

THE MISSING LINK

THE NUMBER SEVEN

THE NUMBER SEVEN AND OUR SOCIETY

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## OBJECTS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

- I *To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color;*
- II *The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and*
- III *The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.*

The articles of H. P. Blavatsky and W. Q. Judge which originally appeared in the *Theosophist*, *Lucifer* and the *Path*, were issued in pamphlet form by THE THEOSOPHY COMPANY, Los Angeles, U.S.A. For the benefit of students and inquirers in India, these are now being reprinted in an Indian edition.

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## FOREWORD

THE articles here presented, taken together, illustrate Madame Blavatsky's intention to address the ordinary reader, appealing to his common sense and native resources. Among her purposes was the desire to free the Western mind from the habitual blindness and prejudices imposed by inherited religion, and also to strengthen its independence of those claims of scientific authority which lacked the support of discernible facts. While fully capable of dealing with the most recondite matters, including the profound reaches of transcendental metaphysics as well as the resources of Western scholarship, her main concern was to awaken the interest of thoughtful people whose inner wonderings had prepared them to look beyond all orthodoxies for answers to their questions. In the pages of the *Theosophist*—in which most of these articles appeared—H.P.B. practiced a philosophical sort of journalism, showing the students of her time how Theosophical expositions could be both philosophically explanatory and vividly interesting, while lightened by a humor she used with grace and telling effect.

H.P.B.'s reply to a correspondent's question, "Is Creation Possible for Man?", appeared in the *Theosophist* for December, 1881. She turned this inquiry into a discussion of how to think about the meanings of an ambiguous word, showing the effect of unexamined assumptions.

"Answers to Queries," published in *Lucifer* for December, 1887,

corrects common misconceptions concerning the path to occult knowledge.

That the ancients possessed knowledge often equalling if not surpassing that known to the scientists and engineers of modern times is a theme which often appears in the writings of H.P.B. In "Old Hindu Ships," a brief note published in the *Theosophist* for November, 1881, she quotes from Marco Polo to show the ship-building skills of the ancient Hindus.

In "Does Vaccination Prevent Smallpox?" (*Theosophist*, March, 1881), H.P.B. quotes from a scientific journal the findings of a report on the incidence of smallpox, the facts disclosed giving support to the traditional resistance of Hindus to injections of impure animal matter into their bodies. She points out that the rise and fall of virulent diseases may take place with little if any apparent relation to the causes assigned by medical research to epidemics.

The shallow character of some of the arguments both for and against the Darwinian theory is the point of "The Missing Link," published in the *Theosophist* for February, 1881. Students of *The Secret Doctrine* will understand why H.P.B. chose to call attention to the race of *Akkas*, noting their anthropoid characteristics, in connection with this question.

The sevening of nature, evident in the colors of the spectrum and the notes of the scale, is endlessly repeated in human tradition and custom, as H.P.B. shows in "The Number Seven," published during the first year of the *Theosophist*, in the issue for June, 1880. The root of sevening in the intelligence and structure of the cosmos would later be explained in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Even in the everyday affairs of the Society and the experiences of H.P.B. during the early days of her work in India, seven was an ever-recurring number. This becomes evident in her article, "The Number Seven and Our Society," which appeared in the *Theosophist* for September, 1880.

## IS CREATION POSSIBLE FOR MAN?

THE EDITOR OF THE THEOSOPHIST, MADAME,

Talking the other day to a friend, who, like me, without being a Theosophist, takes a very great interest in the movements of your Society, I incidentally happened to remark that the "Brothers of the first section" were credited with such large powers, that even *creation* was not at times impossible to them. In support of my assertion, I instanced their own cup and saucer phenomenon, as narrated by Mr. Sinnett in his "Occult World," which phenomenon appeared to me to be something more than the mere *reproduction*, *transference* or *unearthing* from its hiding-place of an article *lost* or *stolen*, like the brooch. My friend, however, warmly objected to my statement—remarking that creation was not possible to man, whatever else he may be able to accomplish.

Believing, as I then did, in Christianity as the most perfect heaven-descended code of ethics on earth, there was a time in the history of my chequered life, (chequered, I mean, as regards the vast sea of doubt and unbelief on which I have been tossing for over twenty years) when I would have myself as warmly, even indignantly, repelled the idea of creation as a possibility to man; but the regular reading of your journal, and a careful perusal of Mr. Sinnett's book and of that marvel of learning and industry your own "Isis Unveiled," have effected quite a revolution (whether for good or bad has yet to be seen) in my thoughts, and it is now some time since I have begun to believe in the possibility of phenomena beyond the range of my own narrow vision.

Will you kindly tell me which of us is right, my friend or I? Not having the honour of being personally known to you, I close this letter only with my initial.

H.

### OUR ANSWER

The questions to be dealt with is hardly whether our correspondent or his friend is right, for we understand him to take up the

prudent attitude of a seeker after truth who shrinks from affirming dogmatically that creation *is* possible for man, even while unwilling to accept the dogmatic negative assertion of his friend that "it is impossible." Before coming to the gist of the question raised, we have, therefore, to notice the illustrations which this letter affords of the ways in which such a question may be considered.

When our correspondent's friend denies that creation is possible for man, we can hardly assume that he does so from any conviction that he has sounded all the mysteries of Nature, and knowing all about the universe,—being able to account for all its phenomena—has ascertained that the process, whatever that may be, which he conceives of as creation does not go on anywhere in obedience to the will or influence of man, and has further ascertained that there is something in man which makes it impossible that such a process should be accomplished. And yet without having done all that, it is bold of him to say that creation is impossible. Assuming that he is not a student of occult science,—and the tone of the letter before us conveys the impression that he is not—our friend's friend when he makes his dogmatic statement, seems to be proceeding on the method but too commonly adopted by people of merely ordinary culture and even by a few men of science—the method which takes a large group of preconceived ideas as a standard to which any new idea must be applied. If the new idea fits in with, and seems to support the old ones, well and good; they smile upon it. If it clashes with some of these they frown at it, and ex-communicate it without further ceremony.

Now the attitude of mind exhibited by our correspondent, who finds many old beliefs, shattered by new ideas, the force of which he is constrained by moral honesty to recognize, and who, therefore, feels that in presence of the vast possibilities of Nature he must advance very cautiously and be ever on his guard against false light held out by time-honoured prejudices and hasty conclusions,—seems to us an attitude of mind which is very much better entitled to respect than that of his over-confident friend. And we are the more anxious to recognize its superiority in the most emphatic language, because when we approach the actual question to be discussed the bearing of what we have to say will be rather in favour of the view which the "friend" takes of "creations,"

if indeed we are all attaching the same significance to that somewhat overdriven word.

It is needless after what we have just said to point out that if we are now going to make some statements as to what is, and what is not the fact, as regards some of the conditions of the universe we are not on that account infringing the rules of thought just laid down. We are simply giving an exposition of our little fragment of occult philosophy as taught by masters who are in a position to make positive statements on the subjects and the credibility of which will never be in danger from any of those apparently inexplicable occurrences related in the books to which our correspondent refers, and likely enough, as he justly conceives, to disturb many of the orthodox beliefs which he has seen crumbling around him.

It would be a volume we should have to write and not a brief explanatory note, if we attempted to begin, by elucidating the conviction we entertain that the Masters of Occult Philosophy above referred to are entitled to say what is and what is not. Enough for the present to say what we believe would be said in answer to the question before us, by *those who know*.

But we must have a clear understanding as to what is meant by creation. Probably the common idea on the subject is that when the world was "created," the creator accorded himself or was somehow accorded a dispensation from the rule *ex nihilo nihil fit* and actually made the world out of nothing—if that is the idea of creation to be dealt with now, the reply of the philosophers would be not merely that such creation is impossible to man but that it is impossible to gods, or God; in short absolutely impossible. But a step in the direction of a philosophical conception is accomplished when people say the world was "created" (we say fashioned)—out of CHAOS. Perhaps, they have no very clear idea of what they mean by Chaos, but it is a better word to use in this case than "nothing." For, suppose we endeavour to conceive chaos as the matter of the universe in an unmanifested state it will be seen at once that though such matter is perfectly inappreciable to ordinary human senses, and to that extent equivalent to "nothing" creation from such materials is not the production of something which did not exist before, but a change of state imposed upon a portion of universal matter which in its

previous state was invisible, intangible and imponderable, but not on that account non-existent.<sup>1</sup> Theosophists-Occultists do not, however, use the word "creation," at all, but replace it by that of EVOLUTION.

Here we approach a comprehension of what may have been the course of events as regards the production of the mysterious cup and saucer described in Mr. Sinnett's book. It is in no way inconceivable that if the production of manifestation in matter is the act accomplished by what is ordinarily called creation that the power of the human will in some of its transcendent developments may be enabled to impose on unmanifested matter or chaos, the change which brings it within the cognisance of the ordinary human senses.

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<sup>1</sup> It is one of the many reasons why Buddhist philosophy refuses to admit the existence and interference in the production of the universe of a direct creator or god. For once admit, for argument's sake, that the world was created by such a being, who, to have done so, must have been omnipotent, there remains the old difficulty to be dealt with—who then created that pre-existing matter, that eternal, invisible, intangible and imponderable something or chaos? If we are told that being "eternal" and imperishable it had no need of being "created," then our answer will be that in such a case there are two "Eternals" and two "Omnipotents"; or if our opponents argue that it is the omnipotent No. 1 or God who created it, then we return from where we first started—to the creation of *something* out of *nothing*, which is such an absolute absurdity before science and logic that it does not even require the final unanswerable query resorted to by some precocious children "and who created God!"—Ed.

## ANSWERS TO QUERIES

A Correspondent from New York writes :

. . . . The Editors of LUCIFER would confer a great benefit on those who are attracted to the movement which they advocate, if they would state:

(1) Whether a would-be-theosophist-occultist is required to abandon his worldly ties and duties such as family affection, love of parents, wife, children, friends, etc.?

I ask this question because it is rumoured here that some theosophical publications have so stated, and would wish to know whether such a *sine qua non* condition really exists in your Rules? The same, however, is found in the New Testament. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, etc., etc," is said in Matthew (x. 37). Do the MASTERS of Theosophy demand as much?

Yours in the Search of Light,  
L.M.C.

This is an old, old question, and a still older charge against theosophy, started first by its enemies. We emphatically answer, NO; adding that no *theosophical* publication could have rendered itself guilty of such a FALSEHOOD and calumny. No follower of theosophy, least of all a disciple of the "Masters of Theosophy" (the *chela* of a *guru*), would ever be accepted on such conditions. Many were the candidates, but "few the chosen." Dozens were refused, simply because married and having a sacred duty to perform to wife and children.<sup>1</sup> None have ever been asked to forsake father or mother; for he who, being necessary to his parent for his support, leaves him or her to gratify his own selfish consideration or thirst for knowledge, however great and sincere, is "unworthy" of the Science of Sciences, "or ever to approach a holy MASTER."

Our correspondent must surely have confused in his mind The-

1. We know but two cases of married "chelas" being accepted; but both these were Brahmins and had *child-wives*, according to Hindu custom, and they were Reformers more than *chelas*, trying to abrogate child-marriage and slavery. Others had to obtain the consent of their wives before entering the "Path," as is usual in India since long ages.

osophy with Roman Catholicism, and Occultism with the dead-letter teachings of the Bible. For it is only in the Latin Church that it has become a meritorious action, which is called serving God and Christ, to "abandon father and mother, wife and children," and every duty of an honest man and citizen, in order to become a monk. And it is in St. Luke's Gospel that one reads the terrible words, put in the mouth of Jesus: "If any *man* come to me, and *hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, his own life also, HE CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE.*" (xiv. 26.)

*Saint (?) Jerome* teaches, in one of his writings, "If thy father lies down across thy threshold, if thy mother uncovers to thine eyes the bosom which suckled thee, *trample on thy father's lifeless body, TRAMPLE ON THY MOTHER'S BOSOM, and with eyes unmoistened and dry, fly to the Lord, who calleth thee!*"

Surely then, it is not from any *theosophical* publication that our correspondent could have learnt such an infamous charge against theosophy and its MASTERS—but rather in some *anti-Christian*, or too dogmatically "*Christian*" paper.

Our society has never been "more Catholic than the Pope." It has done its best to follow out the path prescribed by the Masters; and if it has failed in more than one respect to fulfill its arduous task, the blame is certainly not to be thrown on either Theosophy, nor its Masters, but on the limitations of human nature. The *Rules*, however, of *chelaship*, or discipleship, are there, in many a Sanskrit and Tibetan volume. In Book IV of *Kiu-ti*, in the chapter on "*the Laws of Upasans*" (disciples), the qualifications expected in a "regular *chela*" are: (1) Perfect physical health.<sup>2</sup> (2) Absolute mental and physical purity. (3) Unselfishness of purpose; universal charity; pity for all animate beings. (4) Truthfulness and unswerving faith in the laws of Karma. (5) A courage undaunted in the support of truth, even in face of peril to life. (6) An intuitive perception of one's being the vehicle of the manifested divine *Atman* (spirit). (7) Calm indifference for, but a just appreciation of, everything that constitutes the objective and transitory world. (8) Blessing of both parents<sup>3</sup> and *their permission to become an Upasan* (chela); and (9) Celibacy, and freedom from any obligatory duty."

<sup>2</sup> This rule 1 applies only to the "temple chelas," who must be perfect.

<sup>3</sup> Or one, if the other is dead.



The two last rules are most strictly enforced. No man *convicted of disrespect to his father or mother, or unjust abandonment of his wife*, can ever be accepted even as a *lay chela*.

This is sufficient, it is hoped. We have heard of chelas who, having *failed*, perhaps in consequence of the neglect of some such duty, for one or another reason, have invariably thrown the blame and responsibility for it on the teaching of the Masters. This is but natural in poor and weak human beings who have not even the courage to recognise their own mistakes, or the rare nobility of publicly confessing them, but are always trying to find a scape-goat. Such we pity, and leave to the Law of Retribution, or Karma. It is not these weak creatures, who can ever be expected to have the best of the enemy described by the wise Kiratarjuniya of Bharavi:

The enemies which rise within the body,  
Hard to be overcome—the evil passions—  
Should manfully be fought, *who conquers these*  
*Is equal to the conqueror of worlds.* (xi. 32.)

[ED.]

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We have received several communications for publication, bearing on the subjects discussed in the editorial of our last issue, "Let every man prove his own work." A few brief remarks may be made, not in reply to any of the letters—*which, being anonymous, and containing no card from the writers, cannot be published* (nor are such noticed, as a general rule)—but to the ideas and accusations contained in one of them, a letter signed "M." Its author takes up the cudgels on behalf of the Church. He objects to the statement that the institution lacks the enlightenment necessary to carry out a true system of philanthropy. He appears, also, to demur to the view that "the practical people either go on doing good unintentionally and oftendo harm," and points to the workers amid our slums as a vindication of Christianity—which, by-the-bye, was in no sense attacked in the editorial so criticized.

To this, repeating what was said, we maintain that more mischief has been done by emotional charity than sentimentalists care to face. Any student of political economy is familiar with this fact, which passes for a truism with all those who have devoted attention to the problem. No nobler sentiment than that which animates

the unselfish philanthropist is conceivable; but the question at issue is not summed up in the recognition of this truth. The practical results of his labours have to be examined. We have to see whether he does not sow the seeds of a greater—while relieving a lesser—evil.

The fact that “thousands are making great efforts in all the cities throughout our land” to meet want, reflects immense credit on the character of such workers. It does not affect their creed, for such natures would remain the same, whatever the prevailing dogmas chanced to be. It is certainly a very poor illustration of the fruits of centuries of dogmatic Christianity that England should be so honeycombed with misery and poverty as she is—especially on the biblical ground that a tree must be judged by its fruits! It might, also, be argued, that the past history of the Churches, stained as it is with persecutions, the suppression of knowledge, crime and brutality, necessitates the turning over of a new leaf. The difficulties in the way are insuperable. “Churchianity” has, indeed, done its best to keep up with the age by assimilating the teachings of, and making veiled truces with, science, but it is incapable of affording a true spiritual ideal to the world.

The same Church-Christianity assails with fruitless pertinacity, the ever-growing host of Agnostics and Materialists, but is *as absolutely ignorant, as the latter, of the mysteries beyond the tomb*. The great necessity for the Church, according to Professor Flint, is to keep the leaders of European thought within its fold. By such men it is, however, regarded as an anachronism. The Church is eaten up with scepticism within its own walls; free-thinking clergymen being now very common. This constant drain of vitality has reduced the true religion to a very low ebb, and it is to infuse a new current of ideas and aspirations into modern thought, in short, to supply a logical basis for an elevated morality, a science and philosophy which is suited to the knowledge of the day, that Theosophy comes before the world. Mere physical philanthropy, apart from the infusion of new influences and ennobling conceptions of life into the minds of the masses, is worthless. The gradual assimilation by mankind of great spiritual truths will alone revolutionize the face of civilization, and ultimately result in a far more effective panacea for evil, than the mere tinkering of superficial misery. Prevention is better than cure. Society creates its own outcasts, criminals, and profligates, and then con-

demns and punishes its own Frankensteins, sentencing its own progeny, the "bone of its bone, and the flesh of its flesh," to a life of damnation on earth. Yet that society recognises and enforces most hypocritically Christianity—*i e.*, "Churchianity." Shall we then, or shall we not, infer that the latter is unequal to the requirements of mankind? Evidently the former, and most painfully and obviously so, in its present dogmatic form, which makes of the beautiful ethics preached on the Mount, a Dead Sea fruit, a whitened sepulchre, and no better.

Furthermore, the same "M.," alluding to Jesus as one with regard to whom there could be only two alternatives, writes that he "was either the Son of God or the vilest impostor who ever trod this earth." We answer, not at all. Whether the Jesus of the New Testament ever lived or not, whether he existed as an historical personage, or was simply a lay figure around which the Bible allegories clustered—the Jesus of Nazareth of Matthew and John, is the ideal for every would-be sage and Western candidate Theosophist to follow. That such an one as he, was a "Son of God," is as undeniable as that he was neither the *only* "Son of God," nor the first one, nor even the last who closed the series of the "Sons of God," or the children of Divine Wisdom, on this earth. Nor is that other statement that in "His life he (Jesus) has ever spoken of himself as co-existent with Jehovah, the Supreme, the Centre of the Universe," correct, whether in its dead letter, or hidden mystic sense. In no place does Jesus ever allude to "*Jehovah*"; but, on the contrary, attacking the Mosaic laws and the alleged Commandments given on Mount Sinai, he disconnects himself and his "Father" most distinctly and emphatically from the Sinaitic tribal God. The whole of Chapter V, in the Gospel of Matthew, is a passionate protest of the "man of peace, love and charity," against the cruel, stern, and selfish commandments of "the man of war," the "Lord" of Moses (Exod. xv., 3). "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old times,"—so and so—"But I say unto you," quite the reverse. Christians who still hold to the Old Testament and the Jehovah of the Israelites, are at best *schismatic Jews*. Let them be that, by all means, if they will so have it; but they have no right to call themselves even *Chrestians*, let alone *Christians*.<sup>4</sup>

It is a gross injustice and untruth to assert, as our anonymous

4 See "The Esoteric Character of the Gospels," in this number.

correspondent does, that "the freethinkers are notoriously unholy in their lives." Some of the noblest characters, as well as deepest thinkers of the day, adorn the ranks of Agnosticism, Positivism and Materialism. The latter are the worst enemies of Theosophy and Mysticism; but this is no reason why strict justice should not be done unto them. Colonel Ingersoll, a rank materialist, and the leader of free-thought in America, is recognised, even by his enemies, as an ideal husband, father, friend and citizen, one of the noblest characters that grace the United States. Count Tolstoi is a freethinker who has long parted with the orthodox Church, yet his whole life is an exemplar of Christ-like altruism and self-sacrifice. Would to goodness every "Christian" should take those two "*infidels*" as his models in private and public life. The munificence of many freethinking philanthropists stands out in startling contrast with the apathy of the monied dignitaries of the Church. The above fling at the "enemies of the Church," is as absurd as it is contemptible.

"What can you offer to the dying woman who fears to tread alone the DARK UNKNOWN?" we are asked. Our Christian critic here frankly confesses (a) that Christian dogmas have only developed *fear* of death, and (b) the *agnosticism* of the *orthodox believer* in Christian theology as to the future *post-mortem* state. It is, indeed, difficult to appreciate the peculiar type of bliss which orthodoxy offers its believers in—*damnation*.

The dying man—the average Christian—with a *dark* retrospect in life can scarcely appreciate this boon; while the Calvinist or the Predestinarian, who is brought up in the idea that God may have pre-assigned him from eternity to everlasting misery, through no fault of that man, but simply because he is God, is more than justified in regarding the latter as ten times worse than any devil or fiend that unclean human fancy could evolve.

Theosophy, on the contrary, teaches that *perfect, absolute justice* reigns in nature, though short-sighted man fails to see it in its details on the material and even psychic plane, and that every man determines his own future. The true Hell is life on Earth, as an effect of Karmic punishment following the preceding life during which the evil causes were produced. The Theosophist fears *no hell*, but confidently expects rest and bliss during the *interim* between two incarnations, as a reward for all the unmerited suffering he has endured in an existence into which he was ushered by

Karma, and during which he is, in most cases, as helpless as a torn-off leaf whirled about by the conflicting winds of social and private life. Enough has been given out at various times regarding the conditions of post-mortem existence, to furnish a solid block of information on this point. Christian theology has nothing to say on this burning question, except where it veils its ignorance by mystery and dogma; but Occultism, unveiling the symbology of the Bible, explains it thoroughly.—[ED.]

## OLD HINDU SHIPS

SOME twenty-five years ago two ocean steamships came into collision off the coast of Newfoundland; one sank with all on board, the other was saved in consequence of having the hull divided by iron bulkheads into water-tight compartments. Though the bottom was crushed in the water, it would only fill the compartment where the break was, and so the steamship came safely to port. This then novel improvement in the art of ship-building was brought into such conspicuous notice by that occurrence, and its merits were so palpable, that from that time steamships have been almost universally built with water-tight bulkheads.

Like most other supposed "modern" inventions, this was known to the ancient Hindus; and in quoting what follows from the narrative of the famous—now respected and credited—Venetian traveller of the thirteenth century, Ser Marco Polo,<sup>1</sup> we express the hope that this may serve as one more inducement to young India to respect their ancestors according to their deserts :

Some ships of the larger class have, besides (the cabins), to the number of thirteen bulkheads or divisions in the hold, formed of thick planks let into each other (*incastratt*, mortised or rabbeted). The object of these is to guard against accidents which may occasion the vessel to spring a leak, such as striking on a rock or receiving a stroke from a whale, a circumstance that not unfrequently occurs; for, when sailing at night, the motion through the waves causes a white foam that attracts the notice of the hungry animal. In expectation of meeting with food, it rushes violently to the spot, strikes the ship, and often forces in some part of the bottom. The water, running in at the place where the injury has been sustained, makes its way to the well which is always kept clear. The crew, upon discovering the situation of the leak, immediately remove the goods from the division affected by the water, which, in consequence of the boards being so well fitted, cannot pass from one division to another. They then repair the damage, and return the goods to the place in the hold from whence they had been taken. The ships are all double-planked; that is, they have a course of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*. Edited by Thomas Wright, Esq., M.A. F.S.A., etc., Corresponding Member of the Institute of France. London, 1854.

sheathing-boards laid over the planking in every part. These are caulked with oakum both withinside and without, and are fastened with iron nails. They are not coated with pitch, as the country does not produce that article, but the bottoms are smeared over with the following preparations:—The people take quick-lime and hemp, which latter they cut small, and with these, when pounded together, they mix oil procured from a certain tree, making of the whole a kind of unguent, which retains its viscous property more firmly, and is a better material than pitch.

## DOES VACCINATION PREVENT SMALLPOX?

THE November *Journal of Science* (London) contains an interesting review of Dr. Parkin's new work "Epidemiology, or the Remote Causes of Epidemic Diseases in the Animal and Vegetable Creation," which is well worth reading. Dr. Parkin's theory is that "there occur certain 'pestilential epochs,' during which the world is at frequent intervals devastated by epidemics which travel in a determinate direction from Central or Eastern Asia to the west of Europe and even to America; that during such epochs all diseases, even those not considered as communicable from one person to another, increase in frequency and violence; that these epochs are further marked by Epizootics and by "blights" or widespread diseases in the vegetable world, and are attended by a general intensification of earthquakes, storms, floods, droughts, fogs, seasons of abnormal heat or cold, and other convulsions of inorganic nature. Such an epoch is generally ushered in by the appearance of new diseases, or the reappearance of maladies that had become obsolete." The last great pestilential term, Dr. Parkin thinks, began about the seventh century, and the fatal wave or current rolled westward without check to the beginning of the eighteenth century. During this time a succession of epidemics raged, among them the fearful plague or Black Death. In 1803 an epidemic of yellow fever at Malaga carried off 36,000 persons. The plague visiting London in 1665 destroyed, between the months of June and December, 20,000 persons, or one-third of the then whole population. According to Sydenham it had invaded England every thirty or forty years. In 1770 it was at Marseilles, in 1771 and 1772 at Moscow, in 1815-16 in the Neapolitan dominions. But despite its frequent challenges to medical science the best authorities have confessed that of its treatment little is known (see *Am. Cyclo.* XIII, 369). Nor, in fact, is anything definite known as to the causes of epidemics in general. The author of the medical articles in the *Cyclopedia* just named prophetically (A.D. 1859) says: "The progressive sciences of meteorology and physical geography will probably soon throw additional light upon these



difficult questions." Dr. Parkin's new work comes almost as a fulfilment of this prophecy. He seems to have conclusively disposed of two pet popular theories, that of the sanitary reformers that dirt is the primal cause of epidemics, and the notion that they are propagated by contagion. Such is also the opinion of the reviewer in the *Journal of Science*, who admits that the historical facts mentioned by Dr. Parkin "are decidedly opposed to both." As examples he cites the facts that "the cholera has been known to travel steadily for hundreds of miles in the teeth of a strong monsoon. It often works up a river, showing that it is not occasioned by infectious matter draining into the current." And he adds significantly, "alike in epidemics of plague, cholera, and yellow-fever, it has been found that classes of people who from occupation or habit were most exposed to the air suffered most, whilst those who kept themselves shut up escaped. How ill this agrees with the teachings of the sanitary reformers!"

But we have not referred to this subject merely to show the helplessness of Western scientists in face of one of these mysterious waves of death that flow around the globe at intervals. The immediate cause is the bearing they have upon the subject of compulsory vaccination in India. We have before us an interesting public document<sup>1</sup> kindly sent us by the learned Dr. Leitner, President of the Government University College, Lahore. The opinion of the Anjuman upon the Bill making vaccination compulsory having been asked by the Punjab Government, that body after a sensible and temperate debate, advised against the adoption of the compulsory clause. The Hindu members especially, and Dr. Leitner himself, pointed out that if the ignorant Hindus should once learn that the vaccine lymph is obtained from ulcers on the teats of the cow, there would be a general protest, perhaps forcible resistance, to the enforcement of the Act. For, while certain products of the cow are regarded, upon the authority of Shastras, as holy, all others, including blood and its impurities are regarded as most impure and unholy. And any one who should knowingly permit either of them to enter his body in any manner, would lose caste. We are not aware what action was taken by the authorities in the premises, but if it is not too late perhaps those in charge of the subject will be interested in the following extract from the same article ("The

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the Anjuman-i-Punjab, in connection with the proposed Vaccination Bill, etc.

Sanitary Millennium") in the *Journal of Science*:

Amongst the diseases which had become less frequent and less severe, but which have since resumed an epidemic and highly dangerous character, a prominent place is due to small-pox, especially as its alleged preventive, vaccination, has taken rank among the political questions of the day. We are told that if this disease no longer carries off its victims by tens of thousands, as in the dark ages, the change is due to vaccination. But there can be not a shadow of doubt that small-pox had begun to decline long before the discovery of Jenner was introduced into practice.

In 1722 Dr. Wagstaffe wrote that the mortality among children did not exceed 1 per cent of the cases. From 1796 to 1825 there was not a single epidemic of small-pox in England. Yet, according to a report published by the College of Physicians in 1807, only about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of the population were vaccinated. Now if we admit that the immunity gained by this operation is absolute and permanent, how is it possible that three vaccinated persons out of every 200 would protect the remaining 197? At the present time about 97 per cent of the population are supposed to be vaccinated. Yet so far from being able to protect the residual 3 per cent it is considered that they are imperilled by the obstinacy or neglect of this small minority. We have the lamentable fact that, whilst vaccination has become all but universal, small-pox has reappeared among us not in isolated cases but in epidemics succeeding each other at short intervals, and each more deadly than the foregoing. Thus in the epidemic of 1857-58-59 the deaths were 14,244; in that of 1863-64-65, 20,059, and in that 1870-71-72, 44,840. Thus in the first interval the deaths from this cause had increased 50 per cent, whilst the population had grown only 7 per cent. In the second interval the deaths from small-pox have risen by 120 per cent, but the population only 10 per cent. Another ugly fact is that the number of persons who have been vaccinated but who are subsequently attacked with small-pox is steadily on the increase. At the Highgate small-pox hospital from 1835 to 1851 the previously-vaccinated formed 53 per cent of the total small-pox cases admitted. In 1851-52 it rose to 66.7 per cent; in 1854-5-6 to 71.2 per cent; in 1859-60 to 72; in 1866 to 81.1 and in 1968 to 84 per cent. How are such facts to be reconciled with the orthodox theory that vaccination is a safeguard against small-pox? What would be the conclusion formed by an unprejudiced statistician if these figures were laid before him? If *a* grows more common as *b* increases in number and general distribution no man in his senses will argue that *b* is a hindrance to *a*. The very opposite conclusion, that *b* is causally connected with *a* would seem more legitimate. How the credit of vaccina-

tion is to be saved is not apparent. We cannot cut the knot by supposing that modern medical practitioners are less careful and skilled in the performance of the operation or less scrupulous in the selection of vaccine lymph. There remains, then, merely the conclusion that small-pox, too, has had a period of cessation during the latter part of the past century and the first quarter of the present;—that the apparent success of vaccination was mainly due to its coincidence with this temporary lull, and that the disease is now rapidly regaining its old virulence and re-assuming the pestilential proportions which it displayed in the days of our forefathers.

It is but fair to remark that our esteemed colleague, Dr. D. E. Dudley, President of the Bombay Theosophical Society, takes exception to the accuracy of the above statistics of mortality, and but for the exigencies of his rapidly growing practice would have added a note. Possibly he may find time to do so next month. Meanwhile let us hear from native medical practitioners, astrologers, and pandits what the Shastras have to say as to the cause of epidemics and other abnormal phenomena.

And here is another matter upon which Europe would like to be informed about by them. It is taken from *Spiritual Notes* (London).

According to Dr. Vincenzo Peset y Cervera the crystals of hæmoglobin obtained from the blood of different animals have forms so distinct and characteristic that the origin of a sample of blood may thus be determined! All that is required is to mix the blood with a little bile, when crystals not exceeding 0.003 metre in size are formed in the mass. The shapes of the crystals are said to be as follows: Man, right rectangular prisms; horses, cubes; ox, rhombohedrons; sheep, rhombohedral tables; dog, rectangular prisms; rabbit, tetrahedrons; squirrel; hexagonal tables; mouse, octahedrons, &c. Commenting on these allegations the *Journal of Science* sagely suggests that "if they are confirmed they may serve for the solution of a most important question raised by Dr. Lionel Beale. If the theory of Evolution be true, the crystals obtained from animals which are nearly related should be either identical or such as are in form easily derived from each other. Should the hæmoglobin crystals—*e.g.*, of the horse and the ass, of the dog and the fox, of the rabbit and the hare, or of the rat and the mouse—belong respectively to different systems, it will supply a serious argument in favour of independent creation.

## THE MISSING LINK

A good many of the Western papers are terribly excited over a bit of news just arrived in Europe from Sangoon. The most radical and freethinking of them crow over the fact as well they may in the interest of truth—as though the thickest, and hitherto most impenetrable of the veils covering Mother Nature's doings had been removed for ever, and anthropology had no more secrets to learn. The excitement is due to a little monster, a seven-year old boy, now on exhibition at Sangoon. The child is a native of Cambodia, quite robust and healthy, yet exhibiting in his anatomy the most precious and rare of physical endowments—a real tail, ten inches long and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  thick at its root!

This original little sample of humanity—*unique*, we believe, of his kind—is now made out by the disciples of Darwin and Haeckel to be the *bona (bony?) fide* Missing Link. Let us suppose, for argument's sake, that the evolutionists (whose colours we certainly wear) are right in their hypothesis, and that the cherished theory of having baboons for our ancestors turns out true. Will every difficulty in our way be then removed? By so means: for, then, more than ever will we have to try to solve the hitherto insolvable problem, which comes first, the Man or the Ape? It will be the Aristotelean egg and chicken problem of creation over again. We can never know the truth until some streak of good chance shall enable science to witness at different periods and under various climates either women giving birth to apes, graced with a caudal appendix or female orang-outangs becoming mothers of tailless, and, moreover, *semi-human* children, endowed with a capacity for speech at least as great as that of a moderately clever parrot or mina.

Science is but a broken reed for us in this respect, for science is just as perplexed, if not more so, than the rest of us, common mortals. So little is it able to enlighten us upon the mystery, that the men of most learning are those who confuse us the most in some respects. As in regard to the heliocentric system,

which, after it had been left an undisputed fact more than three centuries, found in the later part of our own a most serious opponent in Dr. Shroepfer, Professor of Astronomy at the University of Berlin, so the Darwinian theory of the evolution of man from an anthropoid, has among its learned opponents one, who, though an evolutionist himself, is eager to oppose Darwin, and seeks to establish a school of his own.

This new "perfectionist" is a professor in the Hungarian town of Funfkirchen, who is delivering just now a series of lectures, throughout Germany. "Man," says he, "whose origin must be placed in the Silurian mud, whence he began evolving from a frog, must necessarily some day re-evolute into the same animal!" So far well and good. But the explanations going to prove this hypothesis which Professor Charles Deezy accepts as a perfectly established fact, are rather too vague to enable us to build any thing like an impregnable theory upon them. "In the primitive days of the first period of evolution," he tells us, "there lived a huge, frog-like, mammalian animal, inhabiting the seas, but which, being of the amphibious kind, lived likewise on land, breathing in the air as easily as it did in water; its chief habitat, though, was in the salt sea-water. This frog-like creature is now what we call—man(!) and his marine origin is proved by the fact that *he cannot live without salt.*" There are other signs about man, almost as impressive as the above by which this origin can be established, if we may believe this new prophet of science. For instance, "a well-defined remnant of fins, to be seen between his thumbs and fingers, as also his insurmountable tendency towards the element of water": a tendency, we remark *passim*, more noticeable in the Hindu than the Highlander!

No less does the Hungarian scientist set himself against Darwin's theory of man descending from the ape. According to his new teaching, "it is not the anthropoid which begot man, but the latter who is the progenitor of the monkey. The ape is merely a man returned once more to its primitive, savage state. Our Professor's views as to geology, and the ultimate destruction of our globe, coupled with his notions regarding the future state of mankind, are no less original and are the very sweetest fruit of his Tree of Scientific Knowledge. Provoking though they do general hilarity, they are nevertheless given out by the "learned" lecturer in quite a serious spirit, and his works are considered among the text-books for colleges. If we have to credit his statement, then we must be-

lieve that "the moon is slowly but surely approaching the earth." The result of such an indiscretion on the part of our fair Diana, is to be *most certainly* the following! "The sea waves will, some day, immerse our globe and gradually submerge all the continents. Then man, unable to live any longer on dry land, will have but to return to his primitive form, *i.e.*, he will rebecome an aquatic animal—a man-frog." And the life-insurance companies will have to shut up their shop and become bankrupts—he might have added. Daring speculators are advised to take their precautions in advance.

Having permitted ourselves this bit of irreverence about Science—those, rather, who abuse their connection with it—we may as well give here some of the more acceptable theories respecting the missing link. These are by no means so scarce as bigots would like to make us believe, Schweinfurth and other great African travellers vouchsafe for the truth of these assertions and believe they have found races which may, after all, be the missing links—between man and ape. Such are the *Akkas* of Africa; those whom Herodotus calls the *Pigmies* (II. 32) and the account of whom—withstanding it came from the very pen of the Father of History—was until very recently believed to be erroneous and they themselves myths of a fabled nation. But, since the public has had the most trustworthy narratives of European travellers, we have learned to know better, and no one any longer thinks that Herodotus has confounded in his account men and the cynocephaloid apes of Africa.

We have but to read the description of the orang-outang and of the chimpanzee to find that these animals—all but the hairy surface—answer in nearly every respect to these *Akkas*. They are said to have large cylindrical heads on a thin neck; and a body about four feet high; very long arms, perfectly disproportionate, as they reach far lower than their knees; a chest narrow at the shoulders and widening tremendously toward the stomach which is always enormous; knees thick, and hands of an extraordinary beauty of design, (a characteristic of monkey's hands, which with the exception of their short thumbs have wonderfully neat and slender fingers tapering to the ends, and always prettily shaped finger nails). The *Akkas'* walk is vacillating which is due to the abnormal size of their stomach, as in the chimpanzee and the orang-outang. Their cranium is large, profoundly depressed at

the root of the nose, and surmounted by a contracting forehead sloping directly backward; a projecting mouth with very thin lips, and a beardless chin—or rather no chin at all. The hair on their heads does not grow, and though less noisy than the orang-outang they are enormously so when compared with other men. On account of the long grass which often grows twice their own size in the regions they inhabit, they are said to jump like so many grasshoppers, to make enormous strides, and, to have all the outward motions of big anthropoids.

Some scientists think—this time with pretty good reason—that the Akkas, more even than the Matimbos of which d'Escayrac de Lauture gives such interesting accounts—the Kimosas, and the Bushin, of austral Africa, are all remnants of the *missing link*.

## THE NUMBER SEVEN

**A** DEEP significance was attached to numbers in hoary antiquity. There was not a people with anything like philosophy, but gave great prominence to numbers in their application to religious observances, the establishment of festival days, symbols, dogmas, and even the geographical distribution of empires. The mysterious numerical system of Pythagoras was nothing novel when it appeared far earlier than 600 years B.C. The occult meaning of figures and their combinations entered into the meditations of the sages of every people; and the day is not far off when, compelled by the eternal cyclic rotation of events, our now sceptical unbelieving West will have to admit that in that regular periodicity of ever recurring events there is something more than a mere blind chance. Already our Western *savants* begin to notice it. Of late, they have pricked up their ears and begun speculating upon cycles, numbers and all that which, but a few years ago, they had relegated to oblivion in the old closets of memory, never to be unlocked but for the purpose of grinning at the uncouth and idiotic superstitions of our *unscientific* forefathers.

As one of such novelties, the old, and matter-of-fact German journal *Die Gegenwart* has a serious and learned article upon "the significance of the number seven" introduced to the readers as a "Culture-historical Essay." After quoting from it a few extracts, we will have something to add to it perhaps. The author says:

The number *seven* was considered sacred not only by all the cultured nations of antiquity and the East, but was held in the greatest reverence even by the later nations of the West. The astronomical origin of this number is established beyond any doubt. Man, feeling himself time out of mind dependent upon the heavenly powers, ever and everywhere made earth subject to heaven. The largest and brightest of the luminaries thus became in his sight the most important and highest of powers; such were the planets which the whole antiquity numbered as *seven*. In course of time these were transformed into *seven* deities. The Egyptians had *seven* original and higher gods; the Phœnicians *seven* kabiris; the Persians, *seven* sacred horses of Mithra; the Parsees, *seven* angels opposed by *seven* demons,



and *seven* celestial abodes paralleled by *seven* lower regions. To represent the more clearly this idea in its concrete form, the *seven* gods were often represented as one *seven-headed* deity. The whole heaven was subjected to the *seven* planets; hence, in nearly all the religious systems we find *seven* heavens.

The belief in the *sapta loka* of the Brahminical religion has remained faithful to the archaic philosophy; and—who knows—but the idea itself was originated in Aryavarta, this cradle of all philosophies and mother of all subsequent religions! If the Egyptian dogma of the *metempsychosis* or the transmigration of soul taught that there were *seven* states of purification and progressive perfection, it is also true that the Buddhists took from the Aryans of India, not from Egypt, their idea of *seven* stages of progressive development of the disembodied soul, allegorized by the *seven* stories and umbrellas, gradually diminishing towards the top on their pagodas.

In the mysterious worship of Mithra there were “*seven* gates,” *seven* altars, *seven* mysteries. The priests of many Oriental nations were sub-divided into *seven* degrees; *seven* steps led to the altars and in the temples burnt candles in *seven*-branched candlesticks. Several of the Masonic Lodges have, to this day, *seven* and *fourteen* steps.

The *seven* planetary spheres served as a model for state divisions and organizations. China was divided into *seven* provinces; ancient Persia into *seven* satrapies. According to the Arabian legend *seven* angels cool the sun with ice and snow, lest it should burn the earth to cinders; and *seven thousand* angels wind up and set the sun in motion every morning. The two oldest rivers of the East—the Ganges and the Nile—had each *seven* mouths. The East had in the antiquity *seven* principal rivers (the Nile, the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Oxus, the Yaksart, the Arax and the Indus); *seven* famous treasures; *seven* cities full of gold; *seven* marvels of the world, &c. Equally did the number *seven* play a prominent part in the architecture of temples and palaces. The famous pagoda of Churingham is surrounded by *seven* square walls, painted in *seven* different colours, and in the middle of each wall is a *seven* storied pyramid; just as in the antediluvian days the temple of Borsippa, now the Birs-Nimrud, had *seven* stages, symbolical of the *seven* concentric circles of the *seven* spheres, each built of tiles and metals to correspond with the colour of the ruling planet of the sphere typified.

These are all “remnants of paganism” we are told—traces “of the superstitions of old, which, like the owls and bats in a dark subterranean, flew away to return no more before the glorious light of Christianity”—a statement but too easy of refutation. If the author of the article in question has collected hundreds of instances to show that not only the Christians of old but even the modern Christians have preserved the number *seven*, and as sacredly as it ever was before, there might be found in reality *thousands*. To begin with the astronomical and religious calculation of old of the pagan Romans, who divided the week into *seven* days, and held the *seventh* day as the most sacred, the *Sol or Sunday* of Jupiter, and to which all the Christian nations—especially the Protestants—make *pūja* to this day. If, perchance, we are answered that it is not from the pagan Romans but from the monotheistic Jews that we have it, then why is not the Saturday or the real “Sabbath” kept instead of the Sunday, or *Sol’s* day?

If in the “*Ramayana*” *seven* yards are mentioned in the residence of the Indian kings; and *seven* gates generally led to the famous temples and cities of old, then why should the Frieslanders have in the tenth century of the Christian era strictly adhered to the number *seven* in dividing their provinces, and insisted upon paying *seven* “*pfennigs*” of contribution? The Holy Roman and Christian Empire has *seven Kurfürsts* or Electors. The Hungarians emigrated under the leadership of *seven* dukes and founded *seven* towns, now called *semigradya* (now Transylvania). If pagan Rome was built on *seven* hills, Constantinople had *seven* names—Byzance, Antonia, New Rome, the town of Constantine, The Separator of the World’s Parts, The Treasure of Islam, Stamboul—and was also called the city on the *seven* Hills, and the city of the *seven* Towers as an adjunct to others. With the Mussulmans “it was besieged *seven* times and taken after *seven* weeks by the *seventh* of the Osman Sultans.” In the ideas of the Eastern peoples, the *seven* planetary spheres are represented by the *seven* rings worn by the women on *seven* parts of the body—the head, the neck, the hands, the feet, in the ears, in the nose, around the waist—and these *seven* rings or circles are presented to this time by the Eastern suitors to their brides; the beauty of the woman consisting in the Persian songs of *seven* charms.

The *seven* planets ever remaining at an equal distance from each other, and rotating in the same path, hence, the idea sug-

gested by this motion, of the eternal harmony of the universe. In this connection the number *seven* became especially sacred with them, and ever preserved its importance with the astrologers. The Pythagoreans considered the figure *seven* as the image and model of the divine order and harmony in nature. It was the number containing twice the sacred number *three* or the "triad," to which the "one" or the divine *monad* was added:  $3 + 1 + 3$ . As the harmony of nature sounds on the key-board of space, between the *seven* planets, so the harmony of audible sound takes place on a smaller plan within the musical scale of the ever-recurring *seven* tones. Hence *seven* pipes in the syrinx of the god Pan (or Nature), their gradually diminishing proportion of shape representing the distance between the planets and between the latter and the earth—and, the *seven*-stringed lyre of Apollo. Consisting of a union between the number *three* (the symbol of the divine triad with all and every people, Christians as well as pagans) and of *four* (the symbol of the cosmic forces or elements), the number *seven* points out symbolically to the union of the Deity with the universe; this Pythagorean idea was applied by the Christians—(especially during the Middle Ages)—who largely used the number *seven* in the symbolism of their sacred architecture. So, for instance, the famous Cathedral of Cologne and the Dominican Church at Regensburg display this number in the smallest architectural details.

No less an importance has this mystical number in the world of intellect and philosophy. Greece had *seven* sages, the Christian Middle Ages *seven* free arts (grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy). The Mahometan Sheikh-ul-Islam calls in for every important meeting *seven* "ulems." In the Middle Ages an oath had to be taken before *seven* witnesses, and the one, to whom it was administered, was sprinkled *seven* times with blood. The processions around the temples went *seven* times, and the devotees had to kneel *seven* times before uttering a vow. The Mahometan pilgrims turn round Kaaba *seven* times, at their arrival. The sacred vessels were made of gold and silver purified *seven* times. The localities of the old German tribunals were designated by *seven* trees, under which were placed *seven* "Schofers" (judges) who required *seven* witnesses. The criminal was threatened with a *seven*-fold punishment and a *seven*-fold purification was required as a *seven*-fold reward was promised to the virtuous. Every one knows the great importance placed in the

West on the *seventh* son of a *seventh* son. All the mythic personages are generally endowed with *seven* sons. In Germany, the king and now the emperor cannot refuse to stand as god-father to a *seventh* son, if he be even a beggar. In the East in making up for a quarrel or signing a treaty of peace, the rulers exchange either *seven* or forty-nine ( $7 \times 7$ ) presents.

To attempt to cite all the things included in this mystical number would require a library. We will close by quoting but a few more from the region of the demoniacal. According to authorities in those matters—the Christian clergy of old—a contract with the devil had to contain *seven* paragraphs, was concluded for *seven* years and signed by the contractor *seven* times; all the magical drinks prepared with the help of the enemy of man consisted of *seven* herbs; that lottery ticket wins, which is drawn out by a *seven-year* old child. Legendary wars lasted *seven* years, *seven* months and *seven* days; and the combatant heroes number *seven*, *seventy*, *seven hundred*, *seven thousand* and *seventy thousand*. The princesses in the fairy tales remained *seven* years under a spell, and the boots of the famous cat—the Marquis de Carabas—were *seven* leagued. The ancients divided the human frame into *seven* parts; the head, the chest, the stomach, two hands and two feet; and man's life was divided into *seven* periods. A baby begins teething in the *seventh* month; a child begins to sit after *fourteen* months ( $2 \times 7$ ); begins to walk after *twenty-one* months ( $3 \times 7$ ); to speak after *twenty-eight* months ( $4 \times 7$ ); leaves off sucking after *thirty-five* months ( $5 \times 7$ ); at *fourteen* years ( $2 \times 7$ ) he begins to finally form himself; at *twenty-one* ( $3 \times 7$ ) he ceases growing. The average height of a man, before mankind degenerated, was *seven* feet; hence the old Western laws ordering the garden walls to be *seven* feet high. The education of the boys began with the Spartans and the old Persians at the age of *seven*. And in the Christian religions—with the Roman Catholics and the Greeks—the child is not held responsible for any crime till he is *seven*, and it is the proper age for him to go to confession.

If the Hindus will think of their Manu and recall what the old Shastras contain, beyond doubt they will find the origin of all this symbolism. Nowhere did the number *seven* play so prominent a part as with the old Aryas in India. We have but to think of the *seven* sages—the *Sapta Rishis*; the *Sapta Loka*—the *seven* worlds; the *Sapta Pura*—the *seven* holy cities; the *Sapta Dvipa*—the *seven* holy islands; the *Sapta Samudra*—the *seven* holy seas; the

*Sapta Parvatta*—the *seven* holy mountains; the *Sapta Arania*—the *seven* deserts; the *Sapta Vriksha*—the *seven* sacred trees; and so on, to see the probability of the hypothesis. The Aryas *never* borrowed anything, nor did the Brahmans, who were too proud and exclusive for that. Whence, then, the mystery and sacredness of the number *seven*?

## THE NUMBER SEVEN AND OUR SOCIETY

THE thoughtful reader must have pondered well over the mysterious import that the number *Seven* seems to have always had among the ancients, as succinctly epitomized in our June number, as well as the theory of cycles, discussed in the July issue. It was there stated that the German scientists are now giving attention to this manifestation of the numerical harmony and periodicity of the operations of Nature. A series of statistical observations, embracing some centuries of historical events, tend to show that the ancients must have been perfectly aware of this law when constructing their systems of philosophy. In fact, when statistical science shall have been fully perfected, as it seems likely to be, there will be constantly increasing proofs that the evolution of heroes, poets, military chieftains, philosophers, theologians, great merchants, and all other remarkable personages, is as capable of mathematical estimate upon the basis of the potentiality of numbers, as the return of a comet by the rules of astronomical calculations. The comparatively modern system of life insurance rests upon the calculated expectancy of life on the average at certain ages; and, while nothing is so uncertain as the probable longevity of any single individual in a community, nothing is more certain than that the probable life-chance of any one person, in the mass of population, can be known on the basis of the general average of human life. In fact, as M. de Cazeneuve, in the *Journal du Magnetisme*, justly observes, the law of numerical proportions is verified in every department of the physical sciences. We see it in chemistry as the law of definite proportions and multiple proportions; in physics, as the law of optics, acoustics, electricity, &c.; in mineralogy, in the wonderful phenomena of crystallization; in astronomy, in the celestial mechanics. Well may the writer, above-quoted, remark: "Physical and moral laws have so infinitely numerous points of contact, that, if we have not as yet reached the point where we can demonstrate their identity, it is none the less certain that there exists between them a very great analogy."

We have attempted to show how, by a sort of common instinct, a peculiar solemnity and mystical significance has been given the

Number *seven* among all people, at all times. It now remains for us to cite, from the experience of the Theosophical Society, some facts which indicate how its power has manifested itself with us. Continually our experiences have been associated with *seven* or some combination or multiple of it. And it must be remembered that, in not a single instance, was there any intention that the number should play a part in our affairs; but, on the contrary, what happened was in many cases exactly the reverse of what we desired. It was only the other day that we began to take any note of the striking chain of circumstances, and some have only been recalled now at the moment of writing.

The two chief founders of our Society were the President, Colonel Olcott, and the Conductor of this Magazine. When they made each other's acquaintance (in 1874), the office number of the former was *seven*, the house number of the latter *seventeen*. The President's Inaugural Address before the Society was delivered, November 17, 1875: the Head-quarters were established in the 47th street, (the up-town streets in New York are all designated by numbers), and Colonel Olcott's office was removed to 71 Broadway. On the 17th December 1879, our delegates to India sailed for London; the voyage, owing to storms and fogs, lasted *seventeen* days; on the 17th January 1880, we left London for Liverpool to take the steamer for Bombay, got on board the next day, but lay all night in the Mersey, and on the 19th—the *seventeenth* day from our landing in England, we got to sea. On March 2—*seventeen* days after reaching Bombay—we removed to the bungalows where we have ever since been living. On the 23rd March, *thirty-five* (7 x 5) days after landing, Colonel Olcott delivered his first public oration on Theosophy, at Framji Cowasji Institute, Bombay. July 7, the first Prospectus, announcing the intended foundation of the THEOSOPHIST was written; on the 27th September, the first "form" was made up at the printing-office, and on October 1—our 227th in India—the magazine appeared.

But we anticipate events. In the beginning of April, last year, Colonel Olcott and the Conductor of this Magazine went to the N. W. Provinces to meet Swami Dayanand, and were absent from the Head-quarters *thirty-seven* days, and visited *seven* different cities during the trip. In December of that year we again went northward, and on the 21st (7 x 3) of that month, a special meeting of the Society of Benares Pandits was held to greet Colonel

Olcott and elect him an Honorary Member in token of the friendliness of the orthodox Hindu pandits for our Society—a most important event.

Coming down to the Ceylon trip, we find, on consulting the diary, that our party sailed from Bombay, May 7, the steamer starting her engines at 7.7 A.M. We reached Point de Galle on the 17th. At the first meeting in Ceylon of candidates for initiation, a group of *seven* persons presented themselves. At Panadure, *seven* were also initiated first, the evening proving so boisterous and stormy that the rest could not leave their houses. At Colombo, *fourteen* ( $7 \times 2$ ) were initiated the first night, while, at the preliminary meeting to organize the local branch temporarily, there were *twenty-seven*. At Kandy, *seventeen* comprised the first body of candidates. Returning to Colombo, we organized the "Lanka Theosophical Society," a scientific branch, on the 17th of the month, and on the evening, when the Panadure branch was formed *thirty-five* names ( $7 \times 5$ ) were registered as follows. *Seven* priests were initiated here during this second visit, and at Bentota, where we tarried to organize a branch, there were again *seven* priests admitted. *Thirty-five* ( $7 \times 5$ ) members organized the Matara branch; and here again the priests taken into fellowship numbered *seven*. So, too, at Galle, *twenty-seven* persons were present on the night of the organization—the rest being unavoidably absent; and at Welitara the number was *twenty-one*, or three times *seven*. Upon counting up the entire number of lay Buddhists included in our *seven* Ceylon branches, that are devoted to the interests of that faith, we find our mystical number *seven* occupying the place of units, and what adds to the singularity of the fact is that the same is the case with the sum-total of priests who joined our Parent Society.

Our septenary fatality followed us all throughout the return voyage to Bombay. Of the Delegation, two members, having urgent business, took an earlier steamer from Colombo, thus reducing our number to *seven*. Two more fully intended to come home from Galle by the vessel of the 7th July, but, as it turned out, she did not touch there and so, perforce, our band of *seven* came together on the 12th—the *fifty-seventh* day after our landing. The sea voyage from Ceylon to Bombay may be said to begin upon leaving Colombo, since the run from Galle to that port is in Ceylonese waters. From friends—five laymen and two priests—



again *seven*—who came aboard at Colombo to bid us farewell, we learned that the July THEOSOPHIST had reached there, and being naturally anxious to see a copy, urgently request that one should be sent us to look at, if possible, before 5 o'clock P.M., the hour at which it was thought we would leave port. This was promised us, and, after our friends left, we watched every craft that came from shore. Five o'clock came, then six and half-past six, but no messenger or magazine for us. At last, precisely, at *seven*, one little canoe was seen tossing in the heavy sea that was running; she approached, was alongside; on her bows, painted on a white ground was the Number *Seven*; a man climbed over the ship's rail, and in his hand was the paper we were waiting for! When the anchor was up and the pilot's bell rang for starting the engines, two of our party ran to look at the ship's clock: it stood at *seven* minutes past 7 P.M.

At Tuticorin, Mr. Padshah, one of our party, went ashore as his desire was to return by rail to Bombay, so as to see Southern India; the little boat in which he went ashore we noticed, after she had got clear from the crowd of craft alongside, bore the number *forty-seven*. Going down the coast on our outward voyage, our steamer touched at *fourteen* (7 x 2 ports; coming home, our vessel, owing to the monsoon weather and the heavy surf along the Malabar Coast, visited only *seven*. And finally, as though to show us that our septenate destiny was not to be evaded, it was at exactly *seven* o'clock—as the log of the S S. *Chanda* shows—when we sighted the pilot off Bombay harbour, at 7.27 the bell rang to slow down the engines, at 7.47 the pilot stepped on the “bridge” and took command of the ship, and, at 9.37, our anchor was dropped off the Apollo Bunder, and our voyage was thus ended on the 24th of July, the *seventy-seventh* day after the one on which we had sailed for Ceylon. To ascribe to mere coincidence this strange, if not altogether unprecedented, concatenation of events, in which the Number *Seven* was, as the astrologers might call it “in the ascendant,” would be an absurdity. The most superficial examination of the doctrine of chance will suffice to show that. And, if, indeed, we must admit that some mysterious law of numerical potentialities is asserting itself in shaping the fortunes of the Theosophical Society, whither shall we turn for an explanation but to those ancient Asiatic philosophies which were built upon the bed-rock of Occult Science?

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